The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

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THE Rev. J. C. Street acknowledges, with thanks, the receipt of 5/- from Mr. W. E. Coysh, of London; 10/- from Mrs. Watson, of Gosforth; and 2/- from Mr. E. G. David, of Hamburg, in aid of the gratuitous publication and circulation of the *Chronicle and Index*, and will be glad of the opportunity of acknowledging other contributions for the same purpose.

THE Treasurer of the Unitarian Society acknowledges the receipt of the following subscriptions for the year 1886:—

Mrs. Russell	£2	0	0
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THE Summer Sunday School Conference will take place at Ballee, on Wednesday, July 21st. The Chair will be taken by the President of the Sunday School Committee, and a paper will be read by the Rev. David Thompson, of Dromore, on "Our Sunday Schools as they are, and as they might be." We are sure that a hearty welcome will be extended to all visitors by the friends at Ballee, and we hope their kind hospitality will be taxed to the uttermost by friends from many congregations. Information as to time of meeting, and means of travelling, will be supplied at the Depository, Queen's Arcade; or by the Secretary of the Sunday School Committee, the Rev. T. Dunkerley, of Comber; or the Secretaries of the Unitarian Society, the Rev. J. H. Bibby, of Ballee, and Mr. R. M'Calmont, of Belfast.

AT the first meeting of the Council of the Unitarian Society, Belfast, Mr. John Ritchie, of Ulsterville, was elected as President for the year, in succession to the Rev. T. Dunkerley, B.A., and a large and representative Sunday School Committee was appointed.

THE season of lectures and classes is now over, and many of our ministers are enjoying a period of comparative rest. Our people are being scattered among the pretty watering-places on our shores, and for months to come will be absent from their usual places of worship. We should be glad to know that at such places as Bangor and Newcastle arrangements had been made for holding services in connection with our churches, but are afraid that, as of old, nothing has been done or will be done in the matter. Some day we may prove more equal to our trusts and more worthy of our calling.

ON Sunday afternoon, June 28th, at four o'clock, the Annual Floral Service took place in the Church of the Second Congregation, Rosemary Street, and was very largely attended. The church in all parts was beautifully decorated with flowers, ferns, &c., and the teachers and scholars of the following Sunday Schools were present:—Hopeton Street, Stanhope Street, and Mountpottinger, together with the school connected with the congregation. The opening hymn was "To Thee our thankful songs we sing," and after this were Scriptural readings. Then came the hymn, "The Sabbath sun was setting low," and after it was prayer. Next came the hymn, "Hand in hand with angels," after which the Rev. J. C. Street delivered an appropriate address on "The Messages of the Flowers about God and Heaven." Some additional hymns were sung, and the proceedings concluded with the benediction.

IT is pleasant to record that the old Essex Street Chapel, London, which for a hundred years has been the head quarters of Unitarianism in the metropolis, has now undergone a transformation suited to the times, and been changed into a hall for meetings, and offices for the Unitarian Association, and for the Sunday School Association, and that it has been formally dedicated to these purposes. In a more marked way it will now be the centre of denominational activity, and be a place of call for all the Unitarian and free Christian people of the empire on the occasion of their visits to London. We are sorry that a debt of about £5,000 remains, but feel sure this will be swept away in a very few months.

THE Anniversaries in connection with the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, and the Sunday School Association, took place this year as usual in London, during Whit week. The attendance was numerous, representative, and influential. The meetings were of an inspiriting character, and the tone throughout was excellent. The sermon of the Rev. F. W. Walters, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, was in the right key, and fully sustained the reputation of the preacher. The business meeting was marked by earnestness and capability, and made every one feel that the affairs of the Unitarian Association were well and efficiently managed. The Conference and Soiree were of a most satisfactory character, and the gathering at the Sunday School Association was, as usual, the most inspiriting of all the proceedings of the week. The paper of Rev. R. A. Armstrong led to a fine discussion, and when the various anniversary proceedings closed, every one returned home feeling that it had been good to take part in them, and that all would be helped thereby to a more hopeful work in that part of God's great field in which they were called to labour.

Soon shall the slumbering morn awake,
From wandering stars of error freed,
When Christ the bread of Heaven shall break
For Saints that own a common creed.

The walls that fence His flocks apart
Shall crack and crumble in decay,
And every tongue and every heart
Shall welcome in the new-born day.

Then shall His glorious Church rejoice,
His word of promise to recall,
One sheltering fold, one Shepherd's voice,
One God and Father over all.

THE Anniversaries of the Remonstrant Synod, and of the Non-Subscribing Association, have just been held in Belfast. The Rev. F. Thomas, the outgoing Moderator of the former body, preached an excellent sermon, and delivered a very suggestive retiring address, and then gave place to the Rev. J. H. Bibby, who was elected as his successor to the office. At the commencement of the proceedings of the Non-Subscribing Association, the retiring President, the Rev. T. Dunkerley, delivered a fine sermon on the "True Christian Foundation," and subsequently gave place to the Rev. W. Napier, who was elected as his successor. The proceedings of both bodies were of the usual character, and not marked by any special features. The next Anniversaries are to be held at Banbridge.

KNOWLEDGE is not complete while anything remains which is believed on the authority of an individual: nor has the teacher finally done his work until he has made his authority needless. Young people must believe many things on the authority of elders: because neither the faculties nor the experience of the young are ripe for judging all things, but authority is a temporary expedient to save the learner from buying knowledge or wisdom too dearly.—*F. W. Newman.*

WHAT IS IN HEAVEN.

THER is lyf withoute ony deth,
And ther is youthe withoute ony elde;
And ther is alle manner welthe to welde:
And ther is rest without ony travaille;
And ther is pees without ony strife,
And ther is alle manner lykinge of lyf:—
And ther is bright somer ever to se,

And ther is nevere wynter in that countrie:—
And ther is more worshipe and honour,
Than evere hade kynge other emperour,
And ther is grete melodie of aungeles songe,
And ther is preysing hem amonge.
And ther is alle manner friendshipe that may be,
And ther is evere perfect love and charitie;
And ther is wisdome without folye,
And ther is honeste without vileneye.
Al these a man may joyes of hevene call:
Ae yutte the most sovereyn joye of alle
Is the sight of Goddes bright face,
In whom resteth alle mannere grace.

—Dr. Richard Ralle, *a Hermit Augustine Monk. (About 1350.)*

THE RELIGION OF PUBLIC OPINION.

BY JAMES C. STREET.

"For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."—John xii. 43.

There is far more enlightenment and free thought in the world—and notably in England—than is publicly avowed and made visible. It is impossible to go much into general society and to converse unrestrainedly with the cultivated classes without discovering that liberal opinions are widely entertained, and that the old standards are being rapidly departed from. Go into any circle of well-informed men and women, and let the conversation glide into the realms of science, philosophy, or religion, and you will observe a wonderful amount of latent and secret surrender of the old-fashioned phraseology and teachings, and a vast amount of sympathy with the most advanced opinions of the age. Enter any scientific lecture hall, or the classes of popular philosophical teachers, and you will notice that the most daring speculations, and especially the most heretical opinions, command rapt attention, while conclusions which are utterly subversive of dogmas which have received the sanction of the churches for ages, are hailed with an enthusiasm that is absolutely startling. You will further notice that so long as no outcry is raised by the theological sentinels of society, and the watchmen are silent, these opinions will be freely spoken of and discussed, without any sense of impropriety or danger, and with many results that are full of benefit to society.

A careful student will also note that the general tone of the newspapers and magazines of the country, with by far the majority of all works of general literature which command wide acceptance among the people, is decidedly liberal and heretical. So long as no question is raised as to the agreement of these constantly uttered opinions with an assumed orthodoxy, the papers and books command a wide acceptance and exercise a liberalizing influence.

The platform, the press, the professional chair, nay, even the pulpit, at certain times, and in various places, unite in the propagation of liberal opinions; and all classes of society, from the intelligent workman to the diligent student of natural science, are influenced largely in consequence.

I see not how any one whose eyes are open, and who is not a slave to prejudice, can deny these facts, or refuse to believe that in all ranks and classes of society a powerful leaven of genuine liberalism is energetically working. The signs of the times in this respect are so obvious and self-evident that he who runs may read.

But another statement of fact will also be received as positively true. The organized liberal Christianity of this country is not numerous nor powerful. Slowly, very slowly, is progress of an outward and tangible kind taking place. Only by the sheerest hard work, the most unremitting toil and patience, the persistent, painstaking, and self-sacrificing efforts of men and women who will not be defeated, and who will die or gain the victory, are these small outward successes gained. No one, save those actually toiling in these regions, can tell what rebuffs, indifference, open and covered hostility, prejudices, and persecutions are met with. Of such labours it may certainly be said that he who in the midst of them can keep up heart and hope, and cling to God and man, is greater than he who taketh a city or ruleth a nation.

In England, only the small minority of avowed Christians belong to the few churches which are free, and which therefore are alone

in harmony with the free movements of the human mind in all directions of intellectual inquiry. This is a fact which needs only to be stated to command acceptance. It is too plainly obvious to be denied. The explanation of the fact opens some interesting but painful chapters in mental and moral history. The problem I want to solve is this—"How is it that there is such a wide-spread liberalism in society, and that the free churches of the land are so few and so slow in their progress?" There are men and women we all know whose theological opinions do not differ from our own; who reject the dogmas which other churches are bound to teach and to defend; who nevertheless belong to these churches, and refuse to cast in their lot with those whose opinions and conclusions are identical with their own. Why is this?

I do not wish to be uncharitable or censorious. Far rather would I err in the opposite direction. But I must be honest and say that which, in my heart, I believe.

First, let me say that no doubt it is pleasant and comfortable to go with our neighbours and friends, and to do pretty much as they do. Things go on so much more smoothly when great numbers can unite. Besides, there is a *fashion* in the affairs of men. People do not like to be different from others. It is hard and trying to stand alone. And many ask—'Why should we dissociate ourselves from the majority and stand in comparative isolation?'

The solution of the problem I have started seems to me to be found in one sad fact, that there is a lack of *moral courage and honesty* among the people. This is a hard saying—but is it not true?

I am prepared to admit that the inducements to remain among the majority are very strong. The *social* power of the church in England is far greater than in any other country in Christendom. Its spiritual power is not so great perhaps; and its command over the intellectual forces of men is certainly very much smaller; but socially it rules. A man belongs to a church as he belongs to a club. It is not deemed respectable in society to have no connection with some religious organization. I remember a young gentleman, well educated and connected, just entering upon a business career. Up to the time when he was about to take rank among the merchants and leading business men of the place where he resided he had hardly entered a church, and had no outward connection whatever with any; but when he entered into a commercial career on his own account, he said he felt it was the proper thing, and would be expected from him that he should join some church. Not that he intended to go there very often, or that he had any strong conviction whatever touching religious matters, but that he ought to comply with the requirements of society as he did in dress and other matters. There are many who feel that in this way the church must be recognized. To belong to the Established Church in England is, of course, the most respectable thing. Other things being equal, two men of the same position, the one belonging to the Establishment, the other to any Dissenting community, are very differently circumstanced. To the one many doors, offices, interests are open, which to the other are rudely closed. One is the road to fashion, while the other is looked down upon as belonging to the lower orders. To men, therefore, whose convictions on religious matters are 'light as air,' and who, only by courtesy, can be spoken of as in any sense religious, the social status which comes from connection with the Establishment decides their course, and they are enrolled among its children. I think it quite beyond controversy that many men and women who wish to take rank in society, and who like to be able, or think they are able, to look down upon others, are by these reasons drawn into the popular churches. They bow to the social influence of religion in the land, and are fashionably pious.

But I do not care to spend much time over men and women such as these. No words of mine, could I speak to them face to face, would be of the slightest service. I simply mention and describe them, and pass on to others.

There are many who, for various reasons

which I have not time now to enlarge upon, also acknowledge the immense social power of the church. Others are what their fathers and mothers were before them. Their own minds are innocent of any independent thought. Never have they troubled themselves to start inquiries, or to investigate problems. They belong to the church as they belong to the nation in which they were born. As they are Englishmen and Scotchmen so are they Churchmen and Presbyterians. Their connection is not by conviction, but simply by inheritance. Ties like these, binding multitudes to the church, are numerous. I must pass them by. I want to deal with another class of people.

There are thoughtful men and women—students, accustomed to think for themselves—who in, what for convenience only I would call secular matters, exercise independent judgment; who prosecute inquiries into scientific matters no matter what outcry is raised against them; are led to conclusions utterly different from what are commonly approved; and who, in scientific meetings, and secular gatherings, when simply scientific considerations are in their minds, speak out with unfaltering boldness even what they know is opposed to the current convictions of society. Many of these men are bold, almost to a fault, where there is no danger, and some few are doubtless bold even when real perils are before them. All of them use language which implies that truth is their sole aim, and nothing short of that will command their allegiance. Vast numbers of such men and women are perfectly conscious that their investigations have led them entirely away from the commonly received theological dogmas of the churches; they smile at the simplicity of any friend who, finding them in the Established Church, takes it for granted that they believe in the Athanasian Creed, with its Trinity and Eternal Hell, and, in a quiet way, shrug their shoulders when they are supposed to believe the doctrines which are preached from the pulpits of Christendom.

Get these men and women by your own fire-side, or in the comparative privacy of the social circle, when there are no reporters, and where the air is not impregnated with ecclesiastics, and you find them distinctly avowing their disbelief in the very doctrines which are declared to be essential, and the rejection of which is affirmed to involve everlasting misery.

But yet they belong to the churches which teach these creeds; in their public capacity, many of them declare themselves to be sons and daughters of the church; interpreted by their outward acts and public utterances they seem to have the most complete sympathy with her forms and doctrines, while as a fact they utterly reject her essential teachings. Brave enough where there is little danger, some of them bold on behalf of science, when it will lead them into unpopularity, they seem to be moral cowards when the dogmas of the church and her social influence and power are concerned.

Daring and logical up to a certain point, they then become timid or worse, and unreasonable. *Science* bids them reject dogmas which the church teaches, but *prudence* holds back their declaration and makes them seem to believe what in their hearts they have rejected.

I cannot find any other explanation of this painful and humiliating position in which many well-known liberal thinkers are placed, than that they are morally weak and cowardly. I know that many persons will say that in thus making such a statement I am hindering, rather than helping, the cause I have at heart. I do not think so. To me it seems absolutely necessary that there should be some plain speaking on these points. Fencing, and word-guarding, and euphemisms have been carried to a dangerous extent. I believe in boldness.

The reticence, the equivocations, the moral casuistry practiced in society needs to be exposed and denounced. The world wants true men—bold men—men who dare to follow conviction and conscience. Nothing great has ever been reached without true courage. The aim of the true man may be expressed in Goethe's words, put into the mouth of Tasso:—

> With modest daring I aspired to near
> The mighty masters of the olden time;
> With lofty courage plann'd to rouse the age
> From lengthened sleep, to deeds of high emprize."

There are doubtless many kinds of courage,

valuable in their degree, but the courage which seems to me to be lacking is the "cool, calm courage which comes of self-respect and of earnestness of purpose through faith in God." What is a *conviction* worth that is not in a manly way embodied in a consistent life? Of what value is the floating liberalism in society if, when the time of testing comes, it shrinks from uttering itself and taking its rightful position?

Deference to popular opinion, to society, to fashion, to the world's requirements, is carried to an utterly dangerous extent. Self-respect, self-reliance, are offered up on this godless shrine, and genuine humanity and honesty are trailed in the mire. People who are in the false position I have described forget the true standard; they do what Paul says certain persons did in his day, they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves. They aim at having a *respectable* profession of religion. And between what is respectable and what is *right* there is generally a wide difference. Some of them, with a prudence that corresponds with that commended in the case of the unjust steward, try to take a middle course, to be in communion with one side and friendly with the other. To use the words of an American preacher—"They mean to have friends on both sides. They are fashionable Christians. They may be called fashionable Christians for two reasons. One is, that their *style of religion* is popular and fashionable; and the other is, that they generally follow worldly fashions. Their aim in religion is not to do anything that will disgust the world. No matter what God requires, they are determined to be so prudent as not to bring on them the censures of the world, nor offend the enemies of God. They have manifestly more regard to men than to God. And if they are ever so circumstanced that they must do that which will displease their friends and neighbours, or offend God, they will offend God. If public sentiment clashes with the command of God, they will yield to public sentiment" (*Finny*). In other words, they love the praise of men more than the praise of God. Let me quote other words, bold and wise. "How base is a man's respectability, the praise of men which falls on him, when he has lost that fountain which alone can hold up any praise, his own self-respect, and faithfulness to himself. . . How mean looks that man who has turned his soul out of doors to bring in the whole world!" *(Parker.)*

I cannot avoid the conclusion that those who continue publicly to profess what they privately reject, and who have one belief for public utterance and another for private acceptance, are moral cowards and lacking the grand virtue of personal integrity. Of course I am not speaking of those who, like the late Bishop Colenso, hold opinions similiar to ours and yet remain within the fold of the Establishment. Though I cannot quite understand how they reconcile their personal relations with the church, I yet feel in my heart that they are honest men and that they are boldly and manfully doing what they believe to be right. Far other men are in my mind. You know the class of men I men as well as I. Men who intellectually agree in our opinions, and *know they do*, and yet turn aside from us, refuse to recognize us, and unite themselves with more powerful churches which persistently denounce the opinions which these men privately hold. Men, perhaps, who have been brought up among us, who still agree with us in our distinguishing opinions, and who for social, business, fashionable or other similar reasons, have drifted from our communion into others with which they have hardly a thought in common or a sentiment in unison. Such men are lacking the moral heroism out of which alone can true greatness come. They sit in the popular churches, "mumbling over those words which once flamed out of the religious consciousness of saints and martyrs, prophets and apostles; but, to these fashionable worshippers, they are cold, hard cinders from another's hearth, once warm to save one, now good for nothing."

Lack of bold, manly, straightforward uprightness and honesty, is the explanation of the strange riddle which I have put before you.

Now I hold the very first, the paramount thing that God requires from a man is that he should be faithful to himself. "Man's conscience is the oracle of God" *(Byron)*. That conscience must be honestly obeyed. To fail in fidelity to one's self is to fail in everything. Selfhood dies. We are no longer individuals, self-poised and self-controlled. We are only *things*, not *men*. Theodore Parker says:—"If I lose my individual selfhood, gain what else I may, the gain is of small consequence; I have lost my own soul, and to get anything without this and hope to keep it, is like keeping money in a purse which has no bottom. Personal fidelity is the first of all duties. I am responsible for what gifts God has given me, not at all for your gifts. You may be great, and I very little; still I must use my little faithfully, nor ever let it be swallowed up in the stream of a great powerful

man, nor in the grand ocean of mankind. Though I may be the fullest and smallest of mortal men, my individuality is just as precious to me as nationality is to the largest nation, or humanity to mankind." A man who is not true to himself, to his own innermost convictions, can never be noble. He may have so trimmed his sails as to be carried into the harbour of prosperity; he may have said smooth things to men of all parties until "all men speak well" of him; he may by his worldly prudence and address have climbed to a high place in popular favour; but his absolute gain is loss. What doth it profit him? In the noble sense he is a great loser—like a gambler he has lost his *all*.

To me therefore it seems essential that the great doctrine of moral fidelity should be preached in the world with the Divine power of solemn conviction. If we want to educe in the world a manhood like this—

> "The man who still suspects and still reveres
> Himself, in nobleness and lowliness
> Of soul, whom no temptations from within
> Force to deformity of life; whom no
> Seductions from without corrupt and turn astray,"

we must proclaim everywhere the need of fidelity. When we can secure anything approaching to this the problem with which I began will be solved. Then outward profession and conduct will reflect fairly inward conviction. There will be no disguises. Every truth as it dawns upon men's minds will be honestly avowed, and they will not shrink from any consequences which it may bring. Only in this way will a brave manhood, and a true womanhood be evolved in the world. Only thus will individuality be sustained. By this means alone will a genuine honesty find a true manifestation.

A truckling, trimming policy always brings degradation. The age of time-servers is ever an age of falsehood. The "facing-both-ways" people bring contempt upon themselves and upon every cause with which they are associated. Who are they whose names live in honour among men? Whose brows are decked with immortal laurels? The time-servers? the cowards? the renegades? the hypocrites? those who love the praise of men more than the praise of God? Not so. But the bold, uncompromising, honest souls, who have dared to be true to themselves and to God; who have scorned to play fast and loose with conviction; who have clung to the right and the noble; and who have always let their public conduct faithfully reflect their honest private principles. And this is the spirit wanted in the world to day.

Seek then, O brethren, the praise of God as the heroes and prophets of humanity sought it. Count the integrity of your souls as better than the approbation of mankind. Cultivate that love of God, and trust in God, which casts out all fear, and the day of dark problems like that I have submitted to you will disappear from your lives forever. Remember that

> Lives of great men all remind us
> We can make our lives sublime,
> And, departing, leave behind us
> Footprints on the sands of time.

Remember he is not the Christian who says, Lord! Lord! and believes all the creeds and worships according to fashion, but *he* who uses his powers as Christ used his; who honours his own spirit, and who keeps a blameless fidelity to his own sense of right. Such as these are the sons of God, who carry on the Divine work in the world, and who will hear the benediction—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you."

THREE LANDS.

Three countries I can see to-day,
  Three countries, fair and far.
I cannot, for I dare not, say
  The half of what they are.

Serene and calm, against the east,
  The land of Has Been lies;
There, storms for evermore have ceased,
  And cloudless are the skies.

From off its quiet hills are blown
  Remembrances, so sweet,
I seem to cross the narrow-zone
  Where past and present meet.

The fairer land of Yet May Be,
  From over in the west,
Is even now inviting me
  To earnest, endless quest.

For flowers, whose names I do not know,
  Light up each shadowed dell;
And rivers, whence I see not, flow
  Whither I cannot tell.

It's glow of gold and amethyst
  But dimly shining through
A veil of thickly rising mist,
  Another land I view.

But vainly for a beckoning hand
  I look across the stream
That shuts me out from this bright land,
  This country of my dream.

A bridge once spanned the stream, but now
  There is no way to cross;
The very winds that fan my brow
  But mock my bitter loss.

No other land is fair as this!
  No other land!—and yet,
In spite of all it's wealth of bliss,
  I stand in mute regret.

In sight of all the perfect years
  I never stepped within,
And view, with grief too deep for tears,
  The land of Might-Have-Been.

Jessie H. Brown.

THE BELFAST UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

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